

ABSTRACT

HISTORICAL TRAUMA IN NATIVE AMERICAN AND JEWISH LITERATURES

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Dr. Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart defines historical trauma as the “collective emotional and psychological injury both over the life span and across generations, resulting from a cataclysmic history of genocide” (Ottenbacher 2). Populations with a legacy of genocide can transfer the psychological trauma from one generation to the next, creating a cycle of effects such as alcoholism, domestic violence, and instability in the home. Native Americans and the Jewish populations carry with them histories of genocide and have the potential to transmit unresolved trauma from generation to generation.

This thesis discusses historical trauma as it is exhibited in selected Native American and Jewish texts. Each chapter discusses a different stage of transmission, and the literatures from Native American and Jewish authors are compared to show similarities and differences. Elie Wiesel’s memoir *Night* (1958) and D’Arcy McNickle’s *Wind from an Enemy Sky* (1978) are used in Chapter One to examine the effects of the trauma on the first generation. The two young boys, Eliezer in *Night* and Antoine in *Wind from an Enemy Sky*, are compared as witnesses to the trauma. Through a sequence of stressors they experience a loss of culture, and are the generation at the root of the cycle of the transmission of historical trauma. In Chapter Two, Sherman Alexie’s *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (2007) and Bernard Malamud’s *The Assistant* (1957) are discussed in regards to the effects of historical trauma on subsequent

generations. Junior in *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, and Morris and his daughter Helen from *The Assistant* are compared to argue the transmission of the effects of historical trauma through observation, subconscious absorption, and sociocultural factors. Junior observes damaging behaviors like alcoholism in his father; while Morris transmits his depression and low self-esteem to Helen who begins to exhibit the same behavior. The final chapter introduces N. Scott Momaday's *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (1969) and uses texts from previous chapters to discuss possible paths towards healing from historical trauma and create a positive collective memory. The importance of comparing the colonization of North America and the Jewish Holocaust is to bring attention to the two histories, and keep them relevant in today's society in order to preserve the memory of those who did not survive, and to fight the denial of the trauma that lingers in the perpetrator's society.

HISTORICAL TRAUMA IN NATIVE AMERICAN AND JEWISH LITERATURES

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INTRODUCTION:

HISTORICAL TRAUMA FROM A LEGACY OF GENOCIDE

The strongest parallel [to Indian suffering] in my mind has always been the Jewish people and the Holocaust. . . . [T]he fact is that you cannot separate our identity from our pain.

(Sherman Alexie, Nygren 157)

Dr. Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart defines historical trauma as the “collective emotional and psychological injury both over the life span and across generations, resulting from a cataclysmic history of genocide” (Ottenbacher 2). Populations with a legacy of genocide can transfer the psychological trauma from one generation to the next, creating a cycle of effects such as alcoholism, domestic violence, and instability in the home. The traumatic events that were witnessed by the first generation to the genocide are often not discussed with the subsequent generations and much of the guilt and grief is internalized, which can lead to misunderstanding and unresolved grief and an unhealthy collective memory. Brave Heart primarily discusses historical trauma in regards to the Native American population, but she also discusses the link historical trauma has with Jewish Holocaust survivors and the subsequent generations. Both populations experience “survivors’ child complex, disenfranchised grief and transposition,” which break down into different psychological causes and effects (Ottenbacher 7).

According to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, in Europe in 1933 the Jewish population was over nine million, and by 1945 at the end of World War II the Germans had “killed nearly two out of every three European Jews.” The Nazi Regime predominantly targeted the Jewish citizens, but also targeted other populations such as gypsies, Poles, Russians and the disabled—200,000 Gypsies, 200,000 mentally or physically disabled patients, and between two and three million Soviet prisoners were systematically exterminated because they

were considered alien and inferior. The killings were carried out through extensively planned methods in order to exterminate as many of the targeted populations as possible. Gas chambers were specifically designed for killing large numbers of people in concentration and forced labor camps that were built to house the targeted populations as prisoners. Many prisoners were executed, starved to death, died of maltreatment or on the “death marches” that were implemented to prevent the liberation of a large number of prisoners.

After the liberation of the concentration and forced labor camps by the Allied forces in 1945 most survivors were left without families or homes to return to and a large number of survivors went to displaced persons camps that were set up by the Allies. As the displaced persons camps closed, the survivors immigrated to America, Israel, and other European nations, which devastated the number of Jewish communities in Europe and traumatized the Jewish culture as a result of many Jews immigrating away from their roots and each other.

Many historians and critics have made direct and indirect comparisons between the Jewish Holocaust and the colonization of the Americas by European settlers. Theda Perdue and Michael Green, in their book *North American Indians: A Very Short Introduction*, state that at the time of European invasion in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, there was a diverse population of natives in America that had “had a millennia to figure out how to live and prosper” on the land, and had “long and dynamic histories, a rich and diverse array of cultures, and a satisfying way of life” (Perdue and Green 16). There were an estimated four hundred different languages spoken in America by the different Native groups at the beginning of the sixteenth century, but only “about half remain alive and forty-six are spoken by enough children to suggest they will survive” (15). The exact number of Natives living in America at the time of European contact is difficult to define, but the estimates range from five to eight million (16). In 1890 the

United States census revealed a shocking collapse of the Native American population with a count of only 250,000 (16). Before contact with European settlers and explorers the Natives had no exposure to foreign diseases from outsiders such as small pox, influenza, whooping cough and a multitude of plague. This lack of immunity to the foreign diseases was devastating to their population. The multitude of deaths by disease was also devastating to their culture because “valuable knowledge died with the elders, necessary skills died with the young adults, mothers and fathers left their children orphans, and when the children died, so did the future” (16). Along with battles over land, food and trade the changes to the Native’s environment was so overwhelming that there was no time to adjust or build up immunity or knowledge of the newcomers to evolve fast enough to adapt before they suffered great losses.

Aside from disease the Native populations were affected by warfare, against European settlers and amongst themselves as land and food became scarce. The battles against the government policies that often appeared to be put in place to benefit, but in the end betrayed them, were disheartening for the Native American tribes who hoped to find a common ground with the European settlers. The Peace Policy, which was implemented during the term of President Grant and was in place from 1869-1876, was meant to keep peace between the government and the Indians on the reservations; however according to Perdue and Green, it was only peaceful for tribes “that followed orders, remained within the boundaries of their reservations and enthusiastically embraced the regimen of culture change that the missionaries/agents proclaimed” (Perdue and Green 78). Ironically under the Peace Policy the conflicts between Sitting Bull and General Custer occurred, and shortly after its abolition the massacre of Wounded Knee occurred. The massacre of Wounded Knee decimated the Native American population of the plains, and is one of the most discussed incidences in the traumatic

history of the Native Americans. The failure of many of the policies can be attributed to the lack of experience the agents and missionaries had with the Natives and their culture. They had no interest in learning the cultures or histories of the Natives and were “petty, insulting, impatient and unreasonable in their relations with their charges” (Perdue and Green 78).

As the buffalo and other sources of food became scarce, starvation drove many Natives to the reservations that had been established by the government. Starvation did not cease when they settled on the reservations, since they depended on the government to ration food, but the reservation officials were not dependable: “congressional appropriations were inconsistent, dishonest agents stole and sold the food, and sometimes officials withheld available rations to control Indians” (Perdue and Green 79). The reservations were meant to control the Native population and to segregate them to specified areas in order to control their effect on the expansion of the European movement; this is comparable to the motivation behind the concentration camps, and ghettos implemented by the Nazi Regime during the Jewish Holocaust which were built to separate the inferior ethnic groups from the rest of the population in order to further to Nazi movement. In both situations the dominating group meant to cleanse the area of the “inferior” ethnic culture and population, although in the case of the Jewish Holocaust some methods were used to exterminate mass numbers of Jews that were not used by the European settlers on the reservations, such as gas chambers. The dire times when the reservations had just been put into place in the nineteenth century led the Natives to turn to their traditions, and the Ghost Dance that had been dreamt by a holy man swept through the Sioux reservations, igniting fear in their non-Native neighbors. The military was called in, and during a search of a Sioux camp at Wounded Knee Creek a shot was fired and led to an outbreak of cannon and gunfire. At least 300 Indians, many of them were unarmed men, women and children, were massacred and,

ended the “brief but spectacular history of the horse-mounted, buffalo hunting Indians of the plains” (79). The attempted extermination of the plains Indians culture is just one example of a piece of the Native American culture that was wiped out by an act of genocide and cultural cleansing.

Aaron Denham stated in his article “Rethinking Historical Trauma: Narratives of Resilience,” that the historical trauma that plagues some members of the Native American population today is attributed to “treaties and government policy resulting in forced removal from homelands, mandated residential schools and forced adoption programs, racism, warfare, murder, smallpox (bioterrorism), and loss of traditional life-ways, subsistence patterns and culture” (Denham 397). The link to their ancestors and culture was uprooted when their land was taken, the tribes were violently split up and segregated, and their beliefs were denied and regarded as those of savages. This disconnection from their ancestors and culture is then passed down to the next generations, because the grief and anger was never resolved; because they were forced to assimilate into the dominating culture or survive on a reservation the subsequent generations grew up in the society and culture that denied their own root culture. This conflict between cultures can confuse the younger generations as far as where their loyalties should lie and what path they should take in order to remain a part of their Native nation, but also be a successful member of society. Centuries of genocide affects the Jewish population, comparable to the centuries of genocide that affects the Native Americans, but this thesis will focus on the mid-twentieth century when approximately six-million Jews were killed by the Nazi regime.

The Jewish population struggles with historical trauma in relation to the Holocaust—the attempted extermination of their race through systematic killing: forced labor, gas chambers, torture, starvation, execution and other shockingly inhumane methods of killing. Many other

countries were unaware of the actual events or turned their heads in order to avoid further conflict, which led to feelings of abandonment and contributed to the internalized rage that is one of the symptoms exhibited by survivors and their children. In Elie Wiesel's memoir of his experiences during the Holocaust, *Night*, Eliezer questions the world's silence repeatedly: "Was I alive? Was I awake? How was it possible that men, women and children were being burned and that the world kept silent?" (Wiesel 32). After the Allies liberated the concentration camps the survivors of the Holocaust were forced to immigrate to other countries that had remained silent during the time of the genocide, or assimilate back into their own society that had been influenced by the Nazi Regime. This parallels the conflict felt by the Native Americans when trying to come to terms with living in the European-influenced culture of America.

This thesis discusses how historical trauma plays a part in Native American and Jewish fiction and non-fiction. The first chapter compares two texts with narratives with characters from the first generation: those who directly experienced the trauma by living it. Elie Wiesel's *Night* (1958), his memoir from his time in multiple concentration camps, will be compared to D'Arcy McNickle's *Wind from an Enemy Sky* (1978) with a focus on the main characters in each text: Eliezer in *Night* and Antoine in *Wind from an Enemy Sky*. Eliezer experienced many facets of the tortures of the Holocaust—the death of his family, the death march, forced labor in Auschwitz and the liberation by the Allied forces. He is a witness to the deterioration of his culture, experiences displacement, and exhibits the roots of the historical trauma response.

Antoine is the youngest generation of the Little Elk people and is a part of the Boarding School and Reservation era after the massacre at Wounded Knee. This era follows centuries of death of the Native population due to European disease and warfare. At the start of the novel he has just been welcomed back into his tribe after he was taken from them to be "educated" in a

boarding school. His mother's passing is what brought him back to the camp, and he is being raised by his grandfather and leader of the tribe Bull. Bull is the strongest holdout against the white government men who are converting the surrounding tribes into farming communities—one of the converted being Bull's brother Henry Jim. Antoine is a witness to the destruction of the land around his tribe, the breaking point of his culture when their sacred bundle is destroyed, and to the death of his family and culture. A majority of *Wind from an Enemy Sky* is narrated in the third-person omniscient, which makes Antoine a more internal character than Eliezer and more of an observer to the trauma rather than a narrator. The story is not narrated by Antoine, and his perspective is broken up into parts throughout the novel. Eliezer tells the story directly to the reader and describes the things he witnesses as he sees them in a more fluid format. Antoine represents the generation that witnesses the boarding school era, as well as the generation that will experience the coming warfare and disease that will further change their culture. The analysis of the effects of historical trauma—psychological, physiological, and sociocultural—through generations will begin with *Night* and *Wind from an Enemy Sky* through comparing the two characters that play the part of witnesses and survivors.

Chapter Two moves into the subsequent generations after the trauma. Junior, a part of the third generation, is the main character of Sherman Alexie's semi-autobiographical novel *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (2007), and Helen from Bernard Malamud's novel *The Assistant* (1957) will be compared to show the effects of historical trauma on the subsequent generations after the original traumatic events. I will also consider Morris in *The Assistant* as an immigrant struggling with the psychological symptoms of trauma. The difference between the forced assimilation of the Native American population into the society that colonized them, and

the assimilation of Morris' family into American society from Europe will be discussed as well in regards to increasing the traumatized mentality.

The final chapter will introduce possible paths to healing as shown through N. Scott Momaday's *The Way to Rainy Mountain* and Elie Wiesel's Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech. Elie Wiesel has become one of the most respected intellectuals and humanitarians of our lifetime. He tells the story of his experiences during the Holocaust in order to fight against apathy and to keep history from repeating itself. Storytelling has become his foundation to link him to his fellow survivors and subsequent generations of the Jewish population affected. Healing the collective memory helps the population as a community move forward. This chapter will also show how for Native Americans, finding positive roots in the native culture can help the population grow from a positive memory instead of one rooted in trauma. Momaday traveled back to the home of his grandmother in search of what links him to his culture. He finds this link in the form of storytelling, which is what shapes his journey in *The Way to Rainy Mountain*. He retells the stories that were passed down to him by his father who has heard them from his own relatives, and thus continuing the oral narrative tradition that is the foundation for remembering and preserving the Native American culture.

The conclusion of this thesis addresses questions regarding what readers can learn from comparing the two histories of trauma as shown through their literatures. The different aspects of historical trauma are considered as a whole as shown through the texts and their characters, and suggestions for further research are discussed. The comparison between the Jewish Holocaust and the colonization of the Native Americans can be considered controversial for multiple reasons, one of which is because comparing one against the other could be seen as implying that one is more important than the other. Another is that pairing the two histories of genocide could

be interpreted as suggesting they are equals or suggesting that histories of genocide are all the same. I argue that this is an important comparison; as Nancy Peterson states in her essay on references to the Holocaust and genocide in Sherman Alexie's work, drawing parallels between the Jewish Holocaust and the colonization of Native Americans is a way for Native Americans to "articulate and call attention to their own traumatic histories" (Peterson 63). By drawing attention to the traumatic histories of the Jewish and Native American populations the authors of the fiction and non-fiction have the ability to create a sense of validation, and a strong collective memory through their stories.

CHAPTER ONE

FIRST GENERATION: WITNESSES TO THE SOURCE OF THE TRAUMA

In Elie Wiesel's *Night* and D'Arcy McNickle's *Wind from an Enemy Sky*, two characters play the roles of witnesses to the source of what will be a legacy of genocide linked to their people. The events that Antoine and Eliezer face are ones that were detrimental to their culture, place in the world, and psyche individually and collectively. For Eliezer and the Jewish population the trauma occurred in a relatively short amount of time. Eliezer's story begins in 1941 when he is a young boy learning about religion, and ends in 1945 where he is recovering from starvation, abuse, and has lost his family to the horrors of the concentration camps. The losses he experienced were so abrupt that he had no time to mourn and would have been severely punished, if not killed, if he had shown emotion or weakness. The legacy of genocide that affects the Native American population began at the time of the European invasion—as early as 1492—and spanned five centuries. This chapter focuses on the period of time when the frontier was closing, the reservation system was put in place, and the Dawes Act of 1887 divided reservation land into farming plots. Two characters, Eliezer and Antoine, will be compared as witnesses to traumatic events that affected their immediate family and community and to the stages in history that marked the beginning of what would be a legacy of genocide and the source of their populations' historical trauma.

Night, the memoir published in 1958 by Elie Wiesel, a Holocaust survivor, follows the journey of Eliezer, a fifteen year old boy, who begins the memoir on track to be a spiritual leader in his community. He and his family begin to hear rumors about Jews being murdered by the German troops, but ultimately deny them in disbelief: “[W]ipe out a population dispersed throughout so many nations? . . . In the middle of the twentieth century!” Eliezer wonders

(Wiesel 8). Eliezer and his family are moved into a ghetto and then taken to a concentration camp in 1944 where he and his father were chosen for labor, and his mother and sisters were never heard from again. Eliezer and his father manage to stay together through transfers to different camps and death marches. In the end Eliezer's father passes from starvation and physical abuse, and his last words were calls for Eliezer. Shortly after the death of his father, Eliezer was admitted to the camp's infirmary with a foot injury and managed to escape the purging of the camp when the camp is about to be liberated. After the camp is liberated, Eliezer finds himself unrecognizable physically and psychologically as a result of the trauma he has endured.

Wind from an Enemy Sky, published in 1978 by D'Arcy McNickle, follows the lives of a fictionalized Native American tribe, the Little Elk people, in the Northwest United States as they battle against the oncoming colonization of their land, and the assimilation of their people into a farming community. The exact year depicted in the novel is never stated, but it is estimated to be in the first half of the twentieth century. Antoine is the grandson of the leader of the Little Elk people, Bull, and has just been sent home from a boarding school due to the death of his mother. The text opens with the discovery of a dam built by the colonizers; this is a devastating blow to the Little Elk people, who viewed the location of the dam as sacred and the stopping of the water as unnatural. This discovery leads to the murder of a dam official by a member of the Little Elk people which along with other events builds up to a confrontation with the government officials and the builder of the dam. Antoine witnesses this gradual buildup to the final confrontation which escalates when the Little Elk people discover that their sacred medicine bundle has been destroyed. The novel ends in a shoot-out with the deaths of Bull, Rafferty the government

official, and the builder of the dam. Antoine survives and represents the survival, but struggle, of the future generations.

The first experiences leading up to the approaching events that will affect the entire population are, according to the research of Dr. Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, considered part of the “First Contact” phase of Historical Trauma (Ottenbacher 4). This idea of “First Contact” in regards to the Native American response to historical trauma is in the introduction of the source of trauma, colonization. Brave Heart describes the process of colonization thus: “introduction of alcohol and disease, main traumatic events (Sitting Bull, Wounded Knee Massacre), boarding schools, relocation and assimilation” (Ottenbacher 4). Aaron Denham, in his article that discusses the transmission of resilience as opposed to trauma, argues that historical trauma can be brought on by “multiple experiences, the accumulation of mild stressors over time, or as a single traumatic event” (Denham 395). In Antoine’s story the reader can identify an accumulation of stressors over a period of time, the first major one being the boarding school, then his mother dying, the dam being built to halt the natural processes and then the escalating argument between the Little Elk people and the white government. According to Dr. Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart each of these stressors has a different effect on the subject in the future, and since the population experiences the events as a collective, the effects have a broad reach which can lead to widespread shared trauma. For example while in the boarding schools, many of the young Native Americans were beaten, raped, their native culture and language prohibited and their personal identity denied. The students were from all regions of the country and these experiences left them in a fragile psychological state that was never resolved. When they returned home to their tribes they were alienated because of the barrier that the “education” has built between their families, tribes and culture. The “lasting effect” of the

experience in the boarding schools is being “ill-prepared for parenting” as a result of the unresolved issues with abuse and cultural displacement (Ottenbacher 5). The coping strategy is often alcohol or drug use if the trauma remains internalized and unresolved, and then it carries onto the next generation beginning the cycle of collective intergenerational trauma.

Midway through *Wind from an Enemy Sky* the reader is able to see that Antoine’s psychological trauma begins with his separation from his mother. The reader learns that when Antoine was taken from his mother she died shortly after: “When the government men came to the camp and took him, without even saying where he would go, she told everybody, ‘he is dead,’ and soon she was dead” (McNickle 110). Antoine’s loved ones and assumptions about life were stripped away by the missionaries in charge when he arrived at the boarding school. Antoine recalls being told by the “Long-Armed Man” (the headmaster), “You students, now, you listen to me. I want you to appreciate what we’re doing for you. . . . Forget where you came from, what you were before; let all of that go out go your minds and listen only to what your teachers tell you” (McNickle 106). With his hair crudely cut and his scalp soaked with kerosene, because the teachers assumed the Native children they brought in were savages with hair full of lice, he became a “student” alongside other young Native Americans from tribes close to his and some from regions far from his native Oregon.

The reader learns of this experience in the boarding school in the middle of the text, and in the beginning of the novel they see a “returning student” who is “letting his hair grow long again. . . . Sometimes he chewed on the end of a braid, just to know it was there” (1). This is an image of renewal, the growth of his hair, but as Jay Vest notes, the “trauma of the boarding school continues to be on his mind” and Bull, his grandfather, is trying to help Antoine reconnect with his culture and the natural world. This is a struggle because the experience of being in a

boarding school, being educated to the Western standards, has alienated Antoine from the tribe and “impaired his relationship with his grandfather Bull” (Vest 50). Bull asks his grandson, “[A]m I talking to you or to a piece of paper?” thus voicing an obvious disapproval for the education Antoine received which leads to the feelings of alienation, even though Antoine was not educated willingly, and whenever he is shown using his education it is to his and his grandfather’s dismay (McNickle 1).

A barrier has begun to be built between Antoine and his traditional culture with the education from the boarding school. Similar to the way the dam stopped the water, the boarding school sealed off some of the traditional mentality that the Little Elk people live with. Perdue and Green in *North American Indians: A Very Short Introduction*, explain the effects that being separated from their tribe and being taken to a boarding school had on adolescent Native Americans: “These youths remembered their Native tongues, but they spoke like children, not adults. They had missed the instruction and rituals that should have inducted them into adulthood,” (Perdue and Green 86). At one point Antoine struggles to find the right words in his Native language to describe his experience in the boarding school: “Of course, there is no such word in his language, but Antoine made it come out right by calling him ‘man with one long arm’—that is, man with a whip in his hand” (9). Using “man who one long arm” instead of “disciplinarian” creates two sides to Antoine’s character because of his experiences at the boarding school. The other members of the Little Elk people do not understand what he means by disciplinarian because this is not a traditional role in their culture—especially not in the way Antoine experienced it when he was whipped and berated for his Indian culture. These little gaps of understanding set Antoine apart from his tribe, which is shameful to him and only adds to the shame he felt as a student in the boarding school being berated for his Native American heritage.

Bull links Antoine's education by the white settlers to his brother Henry Jim, who abandoned the tribe in order to be compensated by the white settlers with a home, land to farm as they taught him, and an education. Henry Jim also stole the Feather Boy Bundle out of anger for not being chosen as the leader of the Little Elk people; he not only left his culture behind, he took a large piece of it with him and sold it to the government. Bull places this internalized anger and disapproval that he has for Henry Jim on Antoine, creating a cycle of alienation and shame. This placement of internalized trauma on the next generation is an illustration of the effects of historical trauma as explained by Dr. Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart. Bull has seen his tribe shrink and his land swallowed up by settlers and the United States government, his grandson kidnapped, and his daughter die. He is being challenged emotionally, culturally and psychologically by the stressors that keep confronting him. His unresolved issues from the death of his daughter, the departure of his brother, and the destruction of his natural world are beginning to create distance between Bull and Antoine. This not only unintentionally transmits emotional stress on to Antoine who is desperately trying to cope with losses of his own, but also makes it more of a struggle for Bull to transmit a positive cultural memory down to Antoine as his grandson.

When colonizing the Native American lands and people the settlers were not just trying to build up their society. With each action, like the building of the dam, they were driving the Native Americans further away from their way of living, traditions and tribal community. This made them weaker as a population which created an opening for the new Western world. Jay Vest explains the difference between the Western view of nature and the Native American view: "The Western world view characterizes nature as 'material, mechanical, devoid of spirit.' Conversely, among Native world view, 'nature throughout' is regarded as 'an extended family or

society of living, ensouled beings'" (Vest 52). The creation of the dam in *Wind from an Enemy Sky* is the breaking point for Antoine's tribe and ultimately leads to the deaths of Bull, the builder of the dam, and the government official Rafferty. Bull explodes at the discovery of the dam, "I am a man walking this earth! Who is this creature who built that thing of rock and stopped the water? . . . Is he a monster first man who decides things in his own way? Why should he do this to me?" (McNickle 7). He views the construction of the dam and the destruction of the earth as a personal attack on his natural world which is an extension of his family.

The "First Contact" phase in regards to the Jewish population's struggle with historical trauma is similar in progression, but different in events. The events are the introduction to World War II (the rumors of extermination and the systematic deportation), acceleration of the extermination through concentration camps (cultural breakdown, starvation, torture, psychological warfare), the defeat of Germany (camps are purged before liberation, marches to escape discovery), and liberation from the camps (displacement, assimilation into a world that seemingly kept silent, no time for grief). As Antoine's experience was marked by an accumulation of different stressors, Eliezer's experience was more abrupt and sent an immediate shock to his system. He experienced the loss of his mother and sisters, many friends and other family, his home, and essentially his childhood in one day. The combination of this abrupt loss and being in a place where he had to switch to a fight to survive mentality made it impossible for him to mourn his loss. He did not have a chance to mourn openly personally, or as a whole with the Jewish population. Even after the war had ended and the camps were liberated, the Jewish population was displaced and the Holocaust was often denied or avoided which leads to disenfranchised grief and internalized rage. The Nazi strategy when exterminating the Jewish race was to not only torture the prisoners physically, but to destroy them psychologically as well.

As Rachel Lev-Wiesel argued in “Intergenerational Transmission of Trauma across Three Generations,” the tactics were “aimed at the annihilation of the Jewish people by destroying the individual’s personality and identity, both as a person and as a Jew” (Lev-Wiesel 80). Eliezer at one point in his journey witnesses a man being attacked and killed by his own son for a piece of bread. The goal of the Nazi regime was to exterminate the Jewish population and to exterminate their humanity on every level as well.

John Roth in his philosophical discussion of *Night* noted that Eliezer was shown at the beginning of the story as “a boy who ‘believed profoundly,’” and that the ending image that the reader is left with of Eliezer gazing into the mirror and seeing himself as a corpse illustrates how the trauma he experienced stripped away “assumptions treasured and person’s loved,” (Roth 60). In *Night* Eliezer witnesses brutality beyond what is imaginable and is separated from his mother and sisters, and in the end his father as well, as Eliezer recalls the Nazi soldier saying, “‘Men to the left! Women to the right!’ Eight words spoken quietly, indifferently, without emotion. Eight simple, short words. Yet that was the moment when I left my mother” (Wiesel 29). Eliezer questions humanity and his perception of what humans are capable of when he watches a truck load of infants being dumped into the flames (32).

Like Antoine, Eliezer experiences changes in the culture and familiar world around him. Eliezer watches as Moishe the Beadle is “deported” with other foreigners, and then after Moishe escapes and returns to the town he listens to Moishe’s stories of the deaths of the other deportees, but like everyone else does not believe him. He describes images that Eliezer cannot process as possible because they are too brutal and too inhumane for the twentieth century. Eliezer reflects on the denial he felt at that time when he says: “Yes, we even doubted his resolve to exterminate us. Annihilate an entire people? . . . So many millions of people! By what means? In the middle

of the twentieth century!” (8). A similar disbelief is present during Antoine’s journey to see the dam with his grandfather Bull who says, “They can’t stop water. Water just swallows everything and waits for more. That’s the way with water” (McNickle 1). McNickle foreshadows the attempt of the white settlers and the Western society to swallow everything that is Native American culture.

The loss of a traditional spiritual connection as a result of trauma is present in both of Eliezer and Antoine’s stories. Eliezer was on the path to become a spiritual leader under the guidance of Moishe the Beadle who caused him to reflect on his beliefs by asking him, “‘Why do you pray?’ he asked after a moment. Why did I pray? Strange question. Why did I live? Why did I breathe?” (Wiesel 4). Praying and worshipping God was natural to him. He had faith in the beginning that God would not allow such atrocities such as Moishe tried to warn the town about. After first witnessing the deaths of the children at his entry to Auschwitz, Eliezer began to feel anger towards God; Eliezer cries, “The Almighty, the eternal and terrible Master of the Universe, chose to be silent. What was there to thank him for?” (33). Eliezer was rooted in his spirituality, but he puts God on trial after a child, who is noted in the text for his purity and beauty, is hung in front of the crowd of prisoners: “But the third rope was still moving: the child, too light, was still breathing. . . . And so he remained for more than half an hour, lingering between life and death, writhing before our eyes. . . . ‘For God’s sake where is God? Where is he? This is where— hanging here from this gallows’” (65). Eliezer watches as the innocent boy is executed without any intervention from the God whom he had trusted so implicitly in the beginning of the memoir. The child is hung in between two other men who die immediately—the fact that the child is executed in the middle parallels the image of Christ’s crucifixion, and metaphorically it is Eliezer’s faith, innocence and childhood that is hanging there from the gallows struggling to

survive. Sandu Frunză quotes Michael Berenbaum when he states that Eliezer's spiritual experience in Auschwitz "is one of absence in a world that was once pregnant with Presence. Where Wiesel formerly experienced God, he has come to encounter the void" (qtd. in Frunză 99).

The references to natural beauty in *Night* offer either a testament of hope or one of irony to the presence of God in Eliezer's journey. Benj Mahle notes that with images of despair and atrocity come images of the natural beauty that still exist around Eliezer while he is in the concentration camps. While being forced to march from one camp to another Eliezer notes the beauty of the day: "Looking around me I had noticed that the barbed wires were behind us. We had left camp. *It was a beautiful day in May. The fragrance of spring was in the air. The sun setting.* But no sooner had we taken a few more steps than we saw the barbed wire of another camp" (emphasis mine) (Wiesel 40). The reader can see Eliezer slipping into nostalgia just for a moment when he takes note of the beauty of the day. The noting of these details also brings a taste of cruelty as well; just as Eliezer finds that image of hope or lightness, the barbed wire of another camp slices through his vision. Though Eliezer recalls some images of natural beauty, he also recalls how indifferent the natural world was in the face of the nightmare he was living in: "Never shall I forget the small faces of the children, whose bodies I saw transformed into smoke under a silent sky" (Wiesel 34). The reader can see the smoke twisting into the sky that does nothing but form a backdrop to the horror of the deaths that Eliezer witnessed. Eliezer does not see hope behind the images that had once shown him the presence of God. He sees these silent images of beauty as God looking silently on as an entire race of his people are being exterminated. This loss of his spiritual connection is also a loss of the connection to his religious heritage and tradition. When they are forced to complete the religious traditions in the camp,

Eliezer sees no point in praising God, and on the eve of Rosh Hashanah though starving no one touched their food and gathered for prayer; Eliezer questions: “Why would I bless him? Every fiber in me rebelled. . . . Because He kept six crematoria working day and night, including Sabbath and Holy Days? Because in His great might, He had created Auschwitz, Birkenau, Buna and so many other factories of death?” (Wiesel 67). He still followed the traditions, but had consciously lost the spiritual connection he had with them.

Antoine’s perspective of the changes being inflicted upon his people by colonization is broader, and the reader watches as the connection to nature, as a root to their traditional spiritual beliefs, is chipped at by the colonization of their territory—the building of the dam, the community of Native Americans who have turned to traditional Western ways like Henry Jim, and the loss of their Feather Boy Medicine Bundle to the government. Before the dam’s construction the location was a place of spiritual retreat and relaxation for the Little Elk people, and with the stopping of the water, “the place where anger was to be left out of men’s thoughts was drowned” (McNickle 6). As opposed to Eliezer who loses his faith as his journey progresses, Antoine tries to regain the connection that he began to lose when he was a student at the boarding school. Throughout the text there is hope for the Little Elk people to strengthen their connection to nature and reach an understanding between them and the government. Near the end of the story there is a moment where the Little Elk people are sharing stories, and the reader sees a revived tradition and a connection between Antoine and his grandfather; “[I]n his storytelling, Bull turned to his grandson, as if pulling the boy to himself... ‘Now, Grandson, someday you will need to know where our people came from and what it was like in the beginning. Perhaps your own son will ask about it, and it will shame you if you can’t tell him’” (McNickle 203). At this moment preserving the past becomes more important than fighting to

return to it. The shame that Bull mentions is one of the effects of trauma that can keep Native Americans who are affected by historical trauma living in the past; which makes it difficult for them to progress in the future.

Wiseman, Metzl, and Barber define “survivor’s guilt” as “feelings of guilt for outliving loved ones, though the survivors themselves were victims of the atrocities, but somehow managed to survive” (Wiseman, Metzl, and Barber 177). Survivor’s guilt plagues those who survived the Jewish Holocaust and the Native Americans who survived the colonization of America. If this guilt is left unresolved and internalized it forces them to live in the past, and their progression forward to live in the present is hampered by guilt they feel for leaving their ancestors behind. They feel a “perceived obligation to their ancestors” to keep the memory of the trauma and their loved ones alive (Ottenbacher 6). The inability to let go of the anger towards those who could have prevented the atrocities also keeps the survivors from being able to move on. Eliezer felt guilty for staying silent while his father called for him near his death and tried to capture the last moment he had with his father in his mind, “I remained more than an hour leaning over him. . . . Etching his bloody, broken face into my mind. . . . His last word had been my name. He had called out to me and I had not answered” (Wiesel 112). Elie Wiesel’s testament to his experiences throughout the Holocaust is his way of ending the silence that he felt weighed so heavily upon him when he did not defend his father just before his death. In the preface of *Night*, Wiesel addresses the original version of the passage that describes his father’s death in which he says, “His voice had reached me from so far away, from so close. But I had not moved. I shall never forgive myself” (Wiesel xii).

The two boys were forced to abandon their childhood for a life that required them to fight for survival. Eliezer and Antoine witnessed the source of the trauma that is linked to their

culture. Elie Wiesel states at the end of the preface to *Night* that “For the survivor who chooses to testify, it is clear: his duty is to bear witness for the dead *and* for the living. He has no right to deprive future generations of a past that belongs to our collective memory” (Wiesel xv). This could also be said for the survivor of the Native American legacy of genocide. Authors like Elie Weisel and D’Arcy McNickle are contributors to the collective memory of their culture, and an obligation to tell the stories of their ancestors is connected to their stories. Eliezer’s trauma was an immediate shock that sent him reeling with disbelief as opposed to Antoine who experienced stressors that accumulated over a period of time until they reached a breaking point at the confrontation with the builder of the dam.

Throughout *Wind from an Enemy Sky* there is a theme of miscommunication across cultures. In the Afterword at the end of the novel Louis Owens notes that this theme is shown through “the barrier of silence between Indian brothers, in miscommunication between Indian and white, and in the seeming impossibility of dialogue between all men” (McNickle 259). Each event of misunderstanding is a chain reaction that leads to the confrontation between the government officials and the Little Elk Indians, which causes the biggest misunderstanding of all over the meaning of the Feather Boy Medicine Bundle to the Little Elk Indians. The first event being the separation of Bull and his brother Henry Jim, who took the Medicine Bundle with him out of spite, and gradually the events, or stressors, built up until they came to a head at the meeting between the Little Elk people, the government officials and Adam Pell who is the builder of the dam. This was the moment when the Little Elk people were under the impression that the Medicine Bundle was supposed to be returned, but unbeknownst to them it had been destroyed. Adam Pell misunderstood the significance of the bundle itself and believed he could simply replace it with something he considered to hold value—a gold statute. This

misunderstanding cost him his life at the hands of Bull who in turn was shot by The Boy, an Indian working as a government police officer. Throughout the confrontation each side's argument is lost in translation, and Adam Pell never understands the value of the Medicine Bundle, and the Little Elk Indians never understand Pell's gesture. Antoine is an observer who speaks both languages, and has the ability to comprehend each side of the story. At the moment when Antoine realizes that Bull is about to kill Adam Pell, he expresses pride when he says: "Black blood [the blood of the government men] would spill on the ground. His grandfather would feel strong again, and the boy was proud for him" (McNickle 255). He understands his grandfather's motivation to kill, and the sacrifice he is about to make. This understanding completes the bond they have been fighting to make throughout the story in order to preserve the future of the Little Elk people by passing down Bull's knowledge and beliefs to Antoine. The fact that Antoine survives is important for the future of the Little Elk people, and could be read as an end to the theme of misunderstanding and hope for the future. The story that is told in *Wind from an Enemy Sky* could be read as a testimony to the Little Elk people and their fight against the dam, and for survival; perhaps told by someone like Antoine, a survivor and witness responsible for adding to the collective memory of the Native American populations, just as Elie Wiesel feels he is responsible to add to that of the Jewish population.

CHAPTER TWO

EFFECTS OF HISTORICAL TRAUMA ON SUBSEQUENT GENERATIONS IN SHERMAN ALEXIE'S *THE ABSOLUTLEY TRUE DIARY OF A PART-TIME INDIAN* AND BERNARD MALAMUD'S *THE ASSISTANT*

The first generation survivors of the trauma that affects the collective population often transmit the psychological effects to their children. The trauma goes unresolved, the grief, rage and memories are internalized, and then manifest themselves through depression, anxiety and Post-Traumatic-Stress-Disorder (PTSD). In the case of the Native American population unresolved issues have led to poverty, alcoholism, ill-prepared parenting, domestic abuse, and diabetes. Many Jewish survivors of the Holocaust immigrated to other countries and struggled with guilt for leaving their country and surviving, and to find their place in a different society; Morris and Helen in Bernard Malamud's *The Assistant* (1957) are good examples of Jewish immigrants who have difficulty successfully assimilating while maintaining a healthy cultural identity.

In Bernard Malamud's novel *The Assistant*, the protagonist Morris Bober is a grocery store owner who gives more food away than he sells. Morris suffers from depression which stems from the unresolved grief he internalizes from the loss of his son, and his feelings of displacement as a Jewish immigrant who fled the Russian military yet has difficulty finding his place in American society. Many of his customers are mirror images of him, struggling Jewish-Americans who are in their own way suffering, and he copes with his suffering by giving many of his customers credit or free food. The story is set in the late 1940s-early 1950s and Jewish immigrants like Morris escaped the direct horror of the concentration camps in Germany, but with that escape comes survivor's guilt that weighs on Morris. He tries to make up for what he may see as abandoning his fellow Jews by letting them buy groceries with credit, opening the

store early to serve one regular customer, and in turn causing his own suffering through economic hardship. Morris' daughter, Helen, works as a secretary and must help pay her parents' bills in order for them to keep the store open. She neglects her studies in order to earn a steady income for her family which is where her own suffering is rooted. Helen feels as though she is a failure for not attending school full-time like her peers who are wealthier than she, and she is conflicted with her Jewish identity as she had lost her virginity to a boy who represents the path she would like to follow as a full-time law student with prospects. After she gives into him too easily he is dismissive of her and treats her like a fall-back which hurts her self-esteem.

Frank Alpine is the non-Jewish assistant who steps into Morris' life to run the grocery store while Morris is ill. Frank takes an interest in Helen and in turn the Jewish culture in order to be suited as a husband for her. Frank's guilt stems from his participation in the robbery that opens the novel which leaves Morris injured and the store in shambles. Frank is constantly trying to redeem his actions only to lose control again. The story peaks when Frank rescues Helen from an attempted rape, but then rapes her himself. This devastating event is followed by Morris falling ill, and then dying only days later. Frank takes over the store and begins to reform himself by learning Jewish traditions and at the end getting circumcised after Passover.

In Michael Brown's article "Metaphor for Holocaust and Holocaust as Metaphor: *The Assistant* and *The Fixer* of Bernard Malamud Reexamined," he argues that the Holocaust is an underlying metaphor illustrated by Morris' quiet suffering and the bleak neighborhood around him. Brown states that Morris is "confined to the store and to his hopeless life, as if to prison," and that the different characters in Morris' life play a part in this metaphor (Brown 483). Morris' greatest competition is with a German store owner, the customer he opens early for each morning is Polish, and Frank who steals from his register and seduces his daughter is Italian; as Brown

points out: “The Germans and their World War II allies conspire against Bober, the Jew” (Brown 483). Morris’ neighborhood is “removed from reality, much like the reservations established for the Jews of Nazi Europe,” and locations outside of this Brooklyn neighborhood sound more like far away fantasies—Helen’s school ambitions, Frank’s past travels, and Morris’ aspirations to sell the store. It is a prison that confines Morris and Helen most obviously, and seems to force them to carry a burden of suffering. Brown concludes that Malamud suggests with the underlying Holocaust metaphor that “Jewish suffering, including that of Holocaust victims, is not futile. . . . Being humane is also a life-giving, exemplary experience, that can offer hope and meaning to one’s self and others” (Brown 484). Through Morris’ suffering he gives new life to Frank who converts to Judaism, and after Morris’ death takes on the burden of running the store. This ending leaves the reader with a feeling of hope for the futures of Helen and Frank who were being held back by Morris’ suffering. The main character in Sherman Alexie’s novel *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* is also affected by the suffering of his family and those around him.

Åse Nygren argues in her introduction to her interview with Sherman Alexie in 2005 that his texts can be considered “trauma narratives” that call “attention to the inherent unsharability of suffering” (Nygren 150). Sherman Alexie’s young adult autobiographical novel *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (2007) confronts current issues on Native American reservations, specifically the Spokane Indian Reservation where the main character, Junior, and his family live. Poverty and alcoholism is prevalent on the Spokane Reservation and in Junior’s life. Much of Junior’s tragedy is because of alcoholism—his mother is a recovering alcoholic, his father is an alcoholic, his sister dies in a trailer fire because she passed out from consuming too much alcohol, his grandmother was hit and killed by a drunk driver, and his father’s best friend

was killed over the last drink in a bottle of liquor. Junior is aware of the stereotypes surrounding his people, and aware of the fact that many of them are being lived out by his family. His best friend Rowdy, who is physically abused by his father, is the only constant in his life. Junior was born with hydrocephaly which caused him to have many medical problems, such as seizures, over-sized hands, feet and head, and speech disorders. After a confrontation with a teacher over the reservation not being able to afford new textbooks, Junior makes the decision to attend the all-white school off of the reservation where ironically the mascot is an Indian. The teacher, Mr. P, convinces him that if he stays on the reservation he will be held back by the negative influences, “You’ve been fighting since you were born. . . . You fought off that brain surgery. You fought off those seizures. You fought off all the drunks and drug addicts. You kept your hope. And now, you have to take your hope and go somewhere where other people have hope. . . . You’re going to find more and more hope the farther and farther you walk away from this sad, sad, sad reservation” (Alexie 43).

Junior confronts his parents after talking to Mr. P and tells them he wants to leave the reservation school to attend Reardan High School in order to find hope off of the reservation. When Junior becomes a student at Reardan, he falls in love with a white girl named Penelope, and makes a new friend named Gordy; but distance grows between him and Rowdy because he left the reservation school, Wellpinit High School. Many nights Junior has to walk the twenty-two miles home or hitch-hike, because his parents can’t afford to put gas in their car to pick him up, and he is too embarrassed to ask his friends at Reardan for a ride. He begins to fit in at Reardan when he earns a spot on the Varsity Basketball team and becomes Penelope’s boyfriend. The story reaches its climax when Reardan has a basketball game against Wellpinit and Junior keeps Rowdy from scoring more than a few points and Wellpinit loses. Junior is struck by how

devastated Rowdy and the Wellpinit players are and is overwhelmed with shame for defeating his own people. Leaving the reservation and defeating his old team makes him feel as though he is betraying his people, and even though he is succeeding in his new school, he has survivor's guilt for leaving his people behind. Aaron Denham in his article "Rethinking Historical Trauma: Narratives of Resilience," states that this is because he is not "sharing the ancestors' pain" and seeming to side with the majority culture instead of his own (Denham 397). In the end Junior and Rowdy find a common ground, and Rowdy defines Junior as a nomad—reaching back to the traditional Native Americans who roamed from their familiar territory instead settling in one place.

Researchers have found that in populations affected by historical trauma there are "higher levels of depression, withdrawal, various forms of anxiety, suicidal ideation and behavior, substance abuse, anger, violence, guilt behavior and adopting a victim identity" (Denham 397). In an article by the Center of Disease Control and Indian Health Services, "1 in 10 Native American Deaths Alcohol Related: Rate is Three Times Higher than General Population, federal report says," a study found that one in every ten deaths of Native Americans is alcohol related, whether it is liver damage, motor-vehicle accidents, homicide due to alcohol consumption, or suicide (Associated Press 2008). Junior is three generations from the boarding school era of the trauma that has affected his Spokane people, and witnesses the way his tribe still lives in the past. Dr. Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart argues that the first generation such as my examples, Eliezer from *Night* and Antoine from *Wind from an Enemy Sky*, suffer from PTSD and historical trauma response, while the subsequent generations, not having actually witnessed the trauma, suffer from "historical unresolved trauma" (Ottenbacher 6). Junior's mother who is an "ex-drunk" and his father who "is a drunk," and his sister who has left the reservation and is also

abusing alcohol are all part of this unresolved trauma that was passed down to them from their ancestors who never fully dealt with the trauma that affected them (Alexie 46). The reservation where they live is a place of collective depression and traumatized identity, and poverty is everywhere. The schools on Junior's reservation have no resources to buy new equipment, textbooks or pay highly qualified teachers; "I was staring at a geometry book that was at least thirty years older than I was. . . . My school and my tribe is so poor and sad that we have to study from the same dang books our parents studied from. That is absolutely the saddest thing in the world" (Alexie 31). The issues of substance abuse, depression, and other physiological/psychological issues are aggravated by "macro-level socio-economic conditions, poor access to healthcare, government policy and racism" (Denham 397). Abusing drugs and alcohol, and taking on the identity of a colonized population are coping mechanisms to avoid resolving the trauma transmitted to them by their ancestors (Ottenbacher 7). After the death of his sister, Junior was disgusted with his relatives and sarcastically mocked their automatic turn towards alcohol: "How do we honor the drunken death of a young married couple? HEY, LET'S GET DRUNK" he thinks angrily to himself (Alexie 213). This cycle of grief and coping with alcohol is kept alive through transmission to the next generation.

Denham discusses Kellerman's theories of different modes of transmission: psychodynamic, sociocultural and socialization, family systems and biological. Psychodynamic theory argues that trauma is transmitted to the child through "the unconscious absorption of repressed and unintegrated trauma experiences," meaning the child is absorbing the behaviors of the parents unconsciously (Denham 397). The identity of those around Junior on the reservation is shaped by the survivor's guilt they carry for surviving, or not directly experiencing the trauma that affected their ancestors. Junior's sister Mary grew up in an environment that did not feed her

desire to be a writer, and she subconsciously took on the mentality of her father and mother that kept her from moving forward towards fulfilling her dream.

According to Denham, sociocultural theory focuses on the “direct impact the parents and social environment have on the child, as the child learns vicariously through observation” (Denham 397). Mary watched her parents drink, and her father turns to alcohol because of his depression. Rowdy watches as his father drinks then physically abuses his mother and then him; as Junior observes, “His father is drinking hard and throwing hard punches, so Rowdy and his mother are always walking around with bruised and bloody faces. ‘It’s war paint,’ Rowdy always says, ‘It just makes me look tougher’” (Alexie 17). Rowdy knows his father drinks and beats him because he is himself in pain; subsequently when Rowdy is in pain he tries to hurt others. Junior’s teacher on the reservation Mr. P. tells Junior: “The only thing you kids are being taught is how to give up. Your friend Rowdy, he’s given up. That’s why he likes to hurt people. He wants them to feel as bad as he does” (Alexie 42). Rowdy’s father is transferring this coping mechanism to Rowdy through observation and physical abuse. Rowdy is angry because he is beaten; he beats others because he is angry.

Junior is more of an observer; he is resilient, perhaps because he is so different from his peers due to his health problems. Junior thirsts for knowledge, and he compares his departure from the reservation to his sister’s when he states, “My sister is running away to get lost, but I am running away because I want to find *something*” (Alexie 46). The family systems model of transmission argues that transmitting the trauma depends on the “communication between generations and the degree of enmeshment that occurs” (Denham 397). Junior defends his parents throughout the novel when he says “They want a better life for my sister and me. . . .And my parents love me so much that they want to help me. Yeah, Dad is a drunk and Mom is an ex-

drunk, but they don't want their kids to be drunks" (Alexie 46). Junior's parents suffer from the effects of historical trauma, but they support their children above everything. By sending Junior to Reardan, they cross a border that was built by their tribe.

Junior discovers the root of the cycle of alcoholism, depression and death—grief and loss—in a play by Euripides, *Medea*, that was introduced to him by his friend Gordy at Reardan. When Medea, one of the main characters asks—"What greater grief than the loss of one's native land?"—Junior is struck by a realization: "We Indians have LOST EVERYTHING. We lost our native land, we lost our languages, we lost our songs and dances. We lost each other. We only know how to lose and be lost" (Alexie 173). After this realization he slips into a deep depression when his father's best friend was killed right after his grandmother was hit and killed by a drunk driver; he thinks, "I could have easily killed myself, killed my mother and father, killed the birds, killed the trees, and killed the oxygen in the air. More than anything I wanted to kill God. I was joyless" (173). Without the support of his classmates at Reardan, and his own conscious realization of cultural loss, Junior may have tried to cope like his father and grandfather had through internalizing the grief and turning to alcohol. After a teacher mocked his grief in front of the class, his classmates rebelled against her, and showed their support for him by standing, dropping their textbooks onto the floor, and walking out. This gave Junior enough hope to find a coping mechanism that became a sort of ceremony, writing and drawing cartoons. Junior wrote and drew illustrations about how he felt, and about things that made him happy instead of things that brought him grief. The "unsharability" that Nygren mentions is emphasized in Junior's story by the prevalence of the trauma and its effects, yet the characters internalize their suffering. Nygren states that Alexie's characters "are muted by the traumas of hatred and chaos, loss and grief. . . and cannot—except in a few rare cases—articulate their suffering" (Nygren 150). Junior

is a case where he is able to find a path to articulate his suffering through reading, writing and drawing cartoons.

Although I discuss paths to healing more fully in the next chapter, I would like to point out here how Junior breaks the chain of transmission by finding another path to heal and help guide others down the path, including Rowdy and his parents. At the end of *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part Time Indian*, Junior weeps with his parents for the loss of his sister, grandmother and Eugene, but he also weeps “because so many of my fellow tribal members were slowly killing themselves and I wanted them to live. I wanted them to get strong and get sober and get the hell off the rez. . . . Reservations were meant to be prisons. . . . Indians were supposed to move on to reservations and die. . . . Indians have forgotten that reservations were meant to be death camps” (Alexie 216-217). Junior knows that it is necessary for his fellow tribal members to realize that reservations are serving the purpose that the colonizers meant them to serve—to keep Indians from surviving as Indians, to keep them from performing ceremonies, from staying close to their natural spiritual connection, and from living outside of the boundaries set for them by those who took away their identity. Junior finds that he still belongs to the Spokane Indian Tribe, but he also belongs to the tribe of “cartoonists, teenage boys, tortilla chips and salsa lovers, funeral goers” (217). He did not have to define himself as a part of only one tribe. Junior resolves his grief and guilt for leaving the reservation and coping with loss by saying, “I would always love and miss my reservation and my tribe. I hoped and prayed they would someday forgive me for leaving them. I hoped and prayed that I would someday forgive myself for leaving them” (230).

In Bernard Malamud’s *The Assistant* the modes of transmission can also be seen through Morris and Helen’s father-daughter relationship and in Morris and Frank’s relationship which

could be seen as a type of father-son relationship. Morris is a self-doubting businessman with a store that reflects his lack of motivation stemming from his depression. His store is not successful due to its appearance; the narrator observes that “in twenty-one years the store had changed little. . . . Ten years ago the sign hanging outside fell to the ground but he had never replaced it” (Malamud 5). When Morris immigrated to Brooklyn from Russia where he had fled service in the military, he moved into a neighborhood of characters that took advantage of him and mocked him. Morris left his father, a poor peddler, back in Russia when he escaped the Czar’s army. He escaped dramatically, being chased by a “red faced sergeant waving a revolver,” and after he tells the story to Frank, he feels saddened, guilty for leaving his father behind and disappointed because his present is so grim (Malamud 83). Frank observes this in his thoughts after hearing Morris’ story, “That was the big jig in his life but where had it got him? He had escaped out of the Russian Army to the U.S.A., but once in a store he was like a fish fried in deep fat” (83).

Helen struggles with her self-esteem after giving up her virginity to Nat Pearl, one of their neighbors who is a law student at Columbia and son of a successful store owner. She had not realized that he had only “wanted without too much trouble a lay and she, half in love, had obliged and regretted,” and he had never bothered to introduce her to any of his friends because “she was as poor as her name sounded, with little promise of a better future” (14). After promising herself she would not give in to him again, she did and “fought self-hatred” causing further damage to her self-image and esteem. In regards to Denham’s psychodynamic mode of transmission, Helen subconsciously absorbs Morris’ behavior—poor self-image, self-esteem and depressive state—and constantly circles back to her economic status, which would be much different if not for Morris’ behavior. Morris lets those around him take advantage and walk all

over him, and Helen is exhibiting the same behavior by letting Nat have his way with her and by letting Louis Karp kiss her in order to keep him satisfied. She is always hoping that things will improve as Morris does, but never makes any steps to improve her predicament. After a date with Louis Karp, another store owner's son, she pictures her father dreaming of the son he had lost and she asks herself, "What am I saving myself for? What unhappy Bober fate?" (46). Helen wants to give up and wallows in her fate which she believes is determined by her inability to find a husband and economic status.

In terms of Denham's family systems mode of transmission, Helen constantly gets advice from her parents, and they show concern for her, even though they are also forced to rely on her to bring in an income when they should be self-sufficient without her. Helen holds education in the highest esteem, because she believes, and rightly so, that she will be able to "change her prospects" with a degree and a good job. Her parents also don't communicate with her about their issues, financial and personal, which leaves many of them unresolved. Morris' mentality improves when he begins to exchange stories with Frank—this communication heals his wounds left by the passing of his son, and the abandonment of his own father because he is building a stronger relationship with Frank through storytelling who he is unconsciously grooming to take over the family business. Helen's relationship with her family could be strengthened through communication and the resolution of underlying issues like Morris' depressive state. This could lead to the improvement of Helen's self-image and the image of her family.

When comparing Helen and Junior as the subsequent generations from the trauma of their ancestors, there is a common thread which is the emphasis on education. They both know that it will be the key to their success, and in Junior's case learning, reading, and drawing become his new roots. In both novels there are two sides to the fence—the educated and the uneducated.

They both would be leaving their families behind by choosing education, but they realize in the end that it is the only way to move forward.

The sociocultural mode of transmission is also stronger in Junior's environment because there is more observable destructive behavior—alcoholism, abuse, and extreme poverty. These behaviors are subconsciously learned, but are also observed constantly by adolescents in not just parents, but grandparents, aunts and uncles, and friends. They are widespread and are sadly what make up the Native American stereotypes. This is not saying that alcoholism and other observable behaviors don't exist in Jewish Holocaust survivors, but the Jewish immigrant population is more widespread than the Native American population like Junior's Spokane tribe which lives on a bordered reservation. The strongest mode of transmission in both novels is the psychodynamic mode for the reason that a majority of the psychological issues the first generation suffers from are not discussed and are then kept unresolved. Much of the rage, guilt and depression are internalized and only surface through behavior like Morris' and Junior's father. The internalization of the trauma has also been considered a separate transmission mechanism called the "conspiracy of silence," or the "explicit or unstated taboo which forbids the asking about or discussion of trauma" (Denham 398). This results in the subsequent generations learning about the trauma in "fragments that are cast in mystery, thus perpetuating a narrative void surrounding the subject or experience" (398). Denham also argues against this theory by saying that it may place more value on "talking about trauma" than is accurate for some cultures because it is a Western model of transmission. In Junior's life the history of his population is taboo in schools like Reardan where many of the controversial acts of the United States government are avoided in discussions, but on the reservation the history surrounding the tribe and the presence of a reservation in and of itself weighs on the tribal members. Although

those on the reservation are aware of the historical events, like the boarding schools and broken policies, they are still not openly discussed or confronted. Junior finds healing in the confrontation of the issues that affect his family and learns through *Medea* to grieve loss openly instead of internalizing it. Helen learns only bits and pieces of how her family came to America and is not involved in the store except for her contributions financially. Her parent's economic status is ominous, and the only information she receives is what she observes. There is no communicative break-through at the end of *The Assistant*. Morris' passing is not a prominent event and Frank's step into his position at the store is subtle. Nothing is discussed or openly confronted as in Junior's resolution. Junior's story exhibited more resilience and desire to cope with the issues at hand; while Helen took on more of her father's personality and moved on after her father's death without breaking the silence. Her father's death was the moment of release instead of being another moment of trauma like the death of Junior's grandmother and sister. These differences illustrate the fact that there is no way to foresee how an individual will react to a traumatic past. Historical trauma affects cultures differently and will different responses will be exhibited through different members of the population.

In Åse Nygren's interview with Sherman Alexie, she asks him about his comparisons to the Jewish Holocaust and his thoughts on collective trauma. He answers by saying that "the strongest parallel in my mind has always been the Jewish people and the Holocaust. . . . [T]he fact is that you cannot separate our identity from our pain" (Nygren 157). A legacy of genocide is attached to the identities of the Native American and Jewish populations. Alexie considers drawing parallels between the two legacies and calling the colonization of America a "Holocaust" rebellious, but he argues that although "the term was generated to mean something specific" he wants it to mean more (Nygren 166). Alexie's use of parallels between the Jewish

Holocaust and the colonization of the Native American people is motivated by honoring the Native American nations that were lost; he says, “I want what happened here to receive the same sort of sacred respect that what happened in Germany does. I want our dead to be honored” (166).

CHAPTER THREE

PATHS TO HEALING IN ALEXIE'S *THE ABSOLUTELY TRUE DIARY OF A PART-TIME INDIAN*, WIESEL'S *NIGHT*, AND MOMADAY'S *THE WAY TO RAINY MOUNTAIN*

Dr. Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart discusses three major hypotheses in regards to paths of healing from historical trauma, and instead of transmitting the trauma, transmitting a resilience that is rooted in a positive collective memory. She argues that “education increases awareness of trauma, sharing affects provides relief, and collective grief resolution creates positive group identity and commitment to community” (Ottenbacher 12). Completing communal grief rituals such as storytelling and sharing personal pain will help relieve some of the psychological pressure from internalizing the trauma and help form a collective grief resolution. Education could be a solution on different levels—on the academic level, as we saw in Junior and Helen’s situation, and on a research level where researching family history, cultures and roots can “increase cultural sensitivity” (10). Peterson emphasizes the need for truth when she quotes Amy Lonetree (Ho-Chunk), “The only way for Native people to heal from the historical trauma that we have experienced—genocidal warfare, land theft, ethnic cleansing, disease, the attempted destruction of our religious and ceremonial life at the hands of the government and Christian churches—is for us to speak the truth about what has happened” (qtd. in Peterson 70). The three hypotheses that I discuss by Dr. Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart are examined to show possible paths to healing in Alexie’s *The Absolutely True Diary of A Part-Time Indian*, and Wiesel’s *Night*, while I introduce Momaday’s *The Way to Rainy Mountain* to supplement the discussion of returning to one’s roots as a path to heal from historical trauma. I will also use passages from Elie Wiesel’s Nobel Peace Prize Acceptance Speech as a

supplemental source to discuss the importance of preserving the memory of the Holocaust to help subsequent generations heal from the trauma.

In Aaron Denham's article, "Rethinking Historical Trauma: Narratives of Resilience," he argues for Native American narratives of resilience and discusses a study that was performed from 2001 to 2002 on the transmission of resilience in a Coeur d'Alene Indian family spanning four generations. The family and surrounding relatives were observed during communal activities such as Pow Wows, a Winter Spirit Dance, and "unstructured" family time, and one on one interviews were conducted in which traditional and historic stories were told (Denham 394). Sherman Alexie is a Coeur d'Alene Indian, and I saw a loose parallel between Junior's family on the Spokane Reservation and the subject family. In 1842 the Coeur d'Alene people encountered Jesuit missionaries who introduced Catholicism and farming techniques in order to make it easier to "convert and educate" the Coeur d'Alene. The Jesuits forced them to "burn their spiritual power bundle... They were given new Christian names. The children were forced to attend residential schools, cut their hair and speak only English. The loss of a traditional name helped transfer one's identity away from his family ancestry... The loss of their language undermined their cultural identity and social cohesiveness" (Denham 402). The father of the subject family stated that "in a very short period of time the Jesuits came in and placed a cut behind the knees of the Coeur d'Alene and we've been crippled ever since" (402). The narratives that were recorded during the study confronted the trauma and told stories of specific moments where the Coeur d'Alene people suffered, but also showed strength and power. In this way the pain was shared as *Brave Heart* suggested, but also discussed in a way that could suggest growth beyond mourning. The father spoke of one moment in particular that resonated in his own life. A family member had been captured, was about to be hung by the U.S. forces and used his last words to tell his

family, “[W]hen times get really really tough, really hard, and you think there is no way out, don’t lie down and die. Sing this song; I leave this song for you. And it will replenish you, carry you forward, and will save your family and your children” (403). The father sang the song many times to help him through while fighting in Vietnam. The man’s daughter also discussed the strength she found in her foundation of the teachings her relatives had taught her while she lived in Europe far removed from her family and culture, “You learn from it, learn from it and try to absorb as much as you can. . . . I think I could have crumbled up in the corner and cried my head off. But, I could just hear my grandma and grandpa talking to me, what are you going to do? . . . It was the teachings, being cemented and strong” (Denham 407). The father was told the story of the death song while he was a child, and then he passed the story down to his daughter. It is this tradition of storytelling, of passing down narratives of strength in the face of trauma that alters the cycle of the effects of historical trauma. Nancy Peterson argues that Sherman Alexie is an influential storyteller in the Native American culture, and his stories in relation to the Jewish Holocaust and the extermination of the Native Americans “emphasize the significance of narrative and storytelling to reveal the truth of a traumatic past” (Peterson 68).

In Sherman Alexie’s *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, Junior’s family suffered from a more desperate domestic situation than that of Denham’s subject family, but at the end of the text there is a different tone from the beginning when the reader first encounters Junior who was full of anger and resentment due to the conditions on the reservation. Junior resolves his grief by sharing his pain in different ways—through his drawings, with his friends, and through communal activities with his tribe. His grandmother’s funeral is the turning point for his relationship with his tribe. Grandmother Spirit was the figure in Junior’s life who never consumed alcohol, upheld tradition, and represented his cultural roots. Her death was another

moment of grief for his family, but the remarkable show of mourning and respect for her helped Junior reconnect with his communal identity. Junior affirms, “I was still a part of the rez. . . . No matter what else happened between my tribe and me, I would always love them for giving me peace on the day of my grandmother’s funeral” (Alexie 160).

Momaday reconnects with his roots after the death of his grandmother as well in *The Way to Rainy Mountain*. N. Scott Momaday’s *The Way to Rainy Mountain* follows the narrator on a journey in his Kiowa ancestors’ footsteps from their ancient beginnings in Montana to his grandmother’s graveside at Rainy Mountain in Oklahoma, which was the place of the Kiowa nation’s final war and surrender. The form of the text is three different voices: the personal, the voice of the ancestors, and the historic commentary. In her article, “‘Dancing the Page’: Orature in N. Scott Momaday’s *The Way to Rainy Mountain*,” Arlene Elder argues that this unique form communicates a “combination of personal and communal expression and composition” (Elder 273). This combination of communal and personal storytelling illustrates the fusion of the voices of his ancestors with his own and represents his return to tradition through his journey to Rainy Mountain. In the prologue to the text Momaday notes that the “verbal tradition by which it [the way to Rainy Mountain] has been preserved has suffered a deterioration in time. What remains is fragmentary” (Momaday 4). By telling the stories, traditions and history of his Kiowa people in the three voice format, he is preserving the three voices as a whole on paper for present and future generations. This text differs from *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* in that it does not confront historical trauma response or depict images of trauma directly. In Junior’s story the reader witnesses through him the effects of historical trauma—alcoholism, poverty, domestic issues—and Junior discusses the losses that the Native American population has experienced over centuries. His story follows him from unresolved trauma to a point of

mourning the loss and healing while remembering the past of his people. Momaday's journey that is depicted in *The Way to Rainy Mountain* does not discuss the trauma in the same way as *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. Momaday takes the reader through his process of remembering the origins of the stories and traditions of the Kiowa people as a way of connecting with his roots, and by recording this journey he gives future generations a way to connect with them as well. It is a path to take to heal from historical trauma and connect with a positive part of the Native American history.

Momaday teaches through *The Way to Rainy Mountain* about sacred traditions like the origin of the Sun Dance and the birth of the Tai-Me bundle, which is only viewed at the annual Sun Dance ceremony and represents the strength of the Kiowa tribe. Traditions like these that may be lost in the memories of ancestors are brought back to life through Momaday's teachings through the three perspectives. The illustrations of the traditional stories are almost like another voice, but are more a part of the ancestral stories and the art of oral tradition. They were painted by Momaday's father to illustrate important moments in the traditional stories, and represent what Arlene Elder calls the "unity of the arts," and the portion of oral performances that cannot be simply told, but must be shown (Elder 273). Elder argues that the paintings are "necessary to the meaning of *The Way to Rainy Mountain* in the same way face and body painting, sacred and secular masks, hand-held objects, and symbolic costuming are intrinsic to ceremonial performances" (Elder 273). In an interview, Momaday noted that he considers illustrative art a form of storytelling in that "writing is drawing, and so the image and the word cannot be divided" (qtd. in Elder 273). Another illustrative detail that further connects the reader to the journey is Momaday's scripting of the title of the text at the bottom of the page and the flow always ending in "The Way," thus guiding the reader down the path throughout the text and it is

almost as if there is another voice showing them *the way* (Elder 274). It is these thematic details that complete the oral tradition that Momaday is trying to preserve, and serve as the element of performance and art that is used in Native American oral tradition to tell parts of the story where words may fail.

The Way to Rainy Mountain can be read different ways, but Arlene Elder suggests that the most “fruitful” reading is as an autobiography. In this reading the significance of Momaday’s personal journey along the path of his ancestors is not lost by assigning the narrator an anonymous identity. Through Momaday’s journey he “constructs a communal self,” and “community here, moreover, includes the reader, in a manner essential for the educative purpose of his book” (Elder 276). By telling a personal story and connecting it to his experiences in the footsteps of his Kiowa ancestors he builds upon his individual identity and takes the reader on an exploration of not only “communal and personal identity construction,” but “that of the conventional journey of maturation” (Elder 276). Through their journey the Kiowa construct their identity as a tribe by coming out of the log and opening themselves up to the natural and spiritual world around them (Elder 276). Just as they built upon their culture by gaining new traditions and facets to their spirituality, Momaday built upon his identity as part of the Kiowa tribe by reviving the culture within himself through storytelling and following their path from their origin.

By following the path of his ancestors and rooting himself in a positive and powerful part of their history, Momaday found a way to revive a positive cultural memory for himself, and set the foundation for the present and future generations to rebuild a positive collective memory. In her article “Historical Trauma Response,” Rosemary Whiteshield says that the significance of a path like the one that Momaday followed is that it is of a path toward healing that is “tapping into

history; not the trauma, but the thousands of years of strength, spiritual direction, inherent resiliency, and the discovery of a positive identity” (Whiteshield 8). Momaday tapped into the history of the Kiowa people and instead of focusing on the destruction of their culture and livelihood at the hands of the European settlers, he focused on how his tribe formed and grew through community and spirituality. Education was a part of Momaday’s journey towards creating a positive identity; he was educated by the stories passed down to him by his father and grandmother which led him on his journey, and by preserving his traditional Kiowa stories in *The Way to Rainy Mountain* he gives others the opportunity to learn the traditions and history as well. Elie Wiesel can be considered a storyteller as well who preserves the memory of the trauma that affects the Jewish population. Instead of writing about a path towards healing in *Night*, he confronts the trauma to create a feeling of validation for those survivors who feel as though those around them cannot understand the terror they experienced in the past or the unresolved feelings of loss and guilt they feel in the present. He also confronts the trauma in his humanitarian efforts and speeches.

Even after the liberation of the concentration camp Eliezer was not able to mourn the loss of his father or mourn the deaths that he witnessed with his fellow prisoners. After he gained back strength, Elie Wiesel waited ten years to share his experiences with the world. Presently he is an influential humanitarian who refuses to stay silent. He shares his pain and memories with those who want to hear and understand in order to “prevent the enemy from enjoying one last victory by allowing his crimes to be erased from human memory” (Wiesel viii). Wiesel shares his pain through recording his experiences and stories in order to confront his pain as a path to healing, and leads many other survivors down the path with him. He also shares his experiences in order to preserve the memory of those who were killed and make sure that the world does not

forget the atrocities that occurred. Wiesel's path towards healing is significantly different from that of Alexie or Momaday. He uses memory as they do, in that he preserves the history for future generations, but he uses the confrontation with the trauma to also confront the unresolved issues that have been fueled by silence that effect subsequent generations. When he hears the voice of the young boy that witnessed and survived the brutality of the Holocaust asking him what he has done with his future he answers, "I tell him that I have tried. That I have tried to keep memory alive, that I have tried to fight those who would forget. Because if we forget, we are guilty, we are accomplices" (Wiesel 118). Wiesel preserves the memory not only to honor and cope with the loss, but to combat the forgetfulness of society. Wiesel's humanitarianism and writing could be perceived as coping strategies to deal with the trauma of his past. By testifying to the deaths he witnessed and the regrets he carries with him, Wiesel attempts to resolve his past and honor the obligation he feels to his family and the boy he was before entering the camp.

Momaday, Alexie and Wiesel use their stories to resolve their grief over the loss of community, culture and family. *Night* is Wiesel's memoir of his experiences through the Holocaust, but he is also telling the story of Eliezer who went into the camp as a spiritual child and only wanted to remain with his father. He came out of the camp empty of spirit and an orphan who perceives himself as a betrayer to his father whose last calls for him went unanswered. The story of Eliezer functions as a communal grief ritual for Elie Wiesel's fellow survivors as a form of storytelling and sharing collective grief. Wiesel's storytelling does not repair the collective identity in the same way as Momaday's, in that in *Night* he focuses on the trauma instead of focusing on the positive past as Momaday does on his journey. He educates those who did not experience the Holocaust and attempts to help the subsequent generations understand what their ancestors went through. This need for understanding ties in with Dr. Maria

Yellow Horse Brave Heart's possible solution for the transmission of trauma—education to increase awareness of trauma, and as Elder suggested, to increase the knowledge of one's history and culture. Momaday preserves the stories of the Kiowa origin, spiritual beliefs and traditions in order to preserve the history of his Native American ancestors and add to the collective memory of his people. Wiesel preserves the history of the trauma itself, he validates the grief and breaks the silence that threatens to internalize the rage, pain and stress of trauma for future generations. The lack of recognition that the decimation of the Native tribes gets in the present affects how the present generations cope with the losses their people have experienced. Many of Alexie's characters "silence themselves or are denied the opportunity to tell the truth," but this is his way of articulating "the terrors of genocide when ordinary words are inadequate" and perhaps adding more of an emphasis on the trauma by making it a more ominous (Peterson 69).

As stated in the introduction to this thesis chapter on paths towards healing from historical trauma, Dr. Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart argues that "education increases awareness of trauma, sharing affects provides relief, and collective grief resolution creates positive group identity and commitment to community" (Ottenbacher 12). As a representative of the subsequent generation, Alexie confronts the effects of historical trauma as he has witnessed it on the reservation, and Momaday follows a path of healing for the present generation by reconnecting with their root culture. As a representative of the survivors of the trauma, Wiesel confronts the trauma as he experienced it and brings the crimes against his people to the forefront thus validating their stories and psychological trauma. The stories educate the reader and the present generations through the characters' experiences in order to bring the discussion of collective trauma, the effects of trauma and the possibility of healing to the table instead of letting the issues stay internalized fueling the cycle of trauma. The texts call for moving past the

trauma by letting go of guilt and pain instead of remaining part of the cycle because of unresolved grief and damaged collective identity.

CONCLUSION

COMPARING LITERATURES FROM TRAUMATIZED POPULATIONS: THE JEWISH HOLOCAUST AND THE COLONIZATION OF NORTH AMERICA.

Throughout this thesis different forms of Native American and Jewish Literature have been compared in terms of how historical trauma manifests itself through the characters and the narratives. In regards to the issue of comparing the legacies of genocide, Lilian Friedberg notes in her article “Dare to Compare: Americanizing the Holocaust” that German-speaking Jewish writers have taken to using the Native American identity and history to “inflect their own historiography with an added degree of moral currency on the landscape of a contemporary German still caught in the throes of denial concerning its own genocidal past” (Friedberg 353). It can be argued that comparing genocidal histories can be seen as trivializing one or both of the legacies if the comparison seems as though it is arguing that one is more important or valid than the other. The purpose of this thesis is to compare Native American and Jewish Literature to show the effects of historical trauma through the main characters, to show the similarities and differences, and to call attention to the importance of preserving the history of the trauma. Native American authors like Sherman Alexie make comparisons to draw attention to their history in order to honor those who were lost and exploited by the European invasion. Alexie states in an interview in 2003 that when he compares the colonization of North America to the Jewish Holocaust: “I’m not measuring the size. One death is too many. . . .And I think they’re [the deaths] all important. I want them all to be acknowledged” (Nygren 166). The interviewer, Åsa Nygren, states during the interview that the collective trauma that is present in the lives of Alexie’s characters “both damages and creates community and identity alike. Both identity and community are, of course, condemned to ongoing dysfunction” (Nygren 157). Alexie responds

by making a parallel between the Native American collective trauma and Jewish collective trauma by saying, “[T]he fact is that you cannot separate our identity from our pain. At some point it becomes our primary identity” (Nygren 157). Sherman Alexie calls this “blood memory,” and if a comparison is made between the two populations, the subsequent generations or outside audience may be able to understand them better through the similarities and differences. Junior in *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* could not separate his suffering from his identity until he understood the source of his suffering, the loss of culture. For example, the comparison made on page 217 in *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* between the concentration camps and the Native American reservations drew attention to the similarity that they were both meant to confine and isolate the “inferior” ethnic groups. This comparison has the potential to change the perception of the reader, and help them understand the motivation behind the reservations or concentration camps by linking something unfamiliar to something familiar. I argue that the comparison between the Jewish Holocaust and the colonization of North America is especially relevant in our present day American society that keeps its genocidal past below the surface of its history textbooks and focuses instead on the Jewish Holocaust.

Lilian Friedberg also argues that in the case of genocidal histories “the perpetrator culture invariably turns its gaze on the horrors registered in the archives and accounts of the ‘other guys’” (Friedberg 354). She theorizes that this is the case in America when textbooks focus on atrocities like the Jewish Holocaust instead of Wounded Knee or Sand Creek (354). This is also the case in Germany in that they often refer to the “lost Americans” instead of those lost in the Jewish Holocaust (353). The denial of the genocide of the Americas is often considered to be rooted in the thought that it was an “inevitable prelude to the rise of the greatest nation on earth,”

(356). It is this denial that emphasizes the importance of recording the history of the trauma and its effects on the populations through literature that reaches many outside ethnic groups and societies through readers. These readers when comparing Native American and Jewish Literature learn about the long lasting effects of trauma, and are educated on the subject of genocide, which is a controversial subject left very much alone in many text books aside from the Jewish Holocaust which is internationally thought of as one of the most inhuman crimes in history. Through this thesis the readers can learn that effects from collective historical trauma are not on the surface; they are internalized and transmitted from one generation to the next if the cycle is not broken through communal or personal mourning of cultural loss. A conversation has been started through Native American and Jewish Literature to bring attention to those who have been affected by genocide, and by studying and comparing the two the conversation will be fueled and ideally become more open and the effected populations will receive the acknowledgement to help heal their past.

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